

**POLICY RESPONSIVENESS TO PUBLIC OPINION:  
THE STATE OF THE DEBATE**

Jeff Manza  
Department of Sociology  
Northwestern University  
1810 Chicago Ave.  
Evanston, IL 60208-1330  
Tel: 847.491.7044  
Email: [manza@northwestern.edu](mailto:manza@northwestern.edu)

Fay Lomax Cook  
Institute for Policy Research  
Northwestern University  
2040 Sheridan Road  
Evanston, IL 60208

July 2001

## **POLICY RESPONSIVENESS TO PUBLIC OPINION**

Jeff Manza and Fay Lomax Cook

**ABSTRACT:** The capacity of a political system to respond to the preferences of its citizens is central to democratic theory and practice. Research and theory about the impact of public opinion on policymaking has produced decidedly mixed views. A number of analysts find a strong and persisting impact of public opinion on public policy. Other analysts reject the idea that the public has consistent views at all, or even if it does, that those views exercise much influence over policymaking. Normative aspects of the opinion/policy link are also controversial. While some analysts have seen new mechanisms for inserting ordinary citizens' views into policy debates through the increasing use of polling, others decry the same processes for their potential to encourage politicians to "pander" to the public. In this paper, we review the state-of-the-art in the debates over the opinion-policy link in the rapidly growing body of research on polls, public opinion, and policymaking in contemporary American politics. We think several conclusions can reasonably be drawn. Where measured public opinion expresses a coherent mood or view on a particular policy question (or bundle of policy questions) in a way that is recognizable by political elites, it is more likely than not that the movement of policy will be in the direction of public opinion. But two crucial caveats must also be entered. First, within the broad parameters established by public opinion, politicians and policy entrepreneurs often have substantial room to maneuver policy in detailed ways that are not visible to the public. Second, while public opinion clearly sets important parameters on policymaking, the combination of contradictory public views on many key policy issues and the capacity of political elites to shape or direct citizens' views significantly reduces the independent causal impact of public opinion.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The capacity of a political system to respond to the preferences of its citizens is central to democratic theory and practice. Yet from the beginning of democratic government until the

advent of modern opinion polling in the 1930s, the main way that mass public opinion could be directly measured was through elections.<sup>1</sup> The rapid growth of opinion polling since the mid-1930s, and the increasing use of polls and other measures of public opinion by politicians and policymakers in recent decades, suggests that at least the *potential* for public opinion (as measured in polls and surveys) to be a major factor in politics has increased dramatically. This was certainly the optimistic hope of some of the pioneers of survey research. For example, writing in 1940 at the dawn of the modern polling era, George Gallup suggested that soon politicians “will be better able to represent...the general public” by avoiding “the kind of distorted picture sent to them by telegram enthusiasts and overzealous pressure groups who claim to speak for all the people, but actually only speak for themselves” (Gallup and Rae 1940, p. 266; for similarly hopeful speculations about the impact of opinion polling on the operation of government, see Truman [1945]; for a vigorous recent restatement, see Verba’s [1996] 1995 APSA presidential address.

However, a considerable body of research and theorizing about the impact of public opinion on policymaking since Gallup’s early speculation has produced decidedly mixed views about the possibilities.. A number of analysts find a strong and persisting impact of public

---

<sup>1</sup> To be sure, other expressions of “public opinion” were visible to political actors before poll data became available: social movements and other forms of contentious politics, interest group activities, letters from constituents to their elected officials, petitions, editorial opinion in newspapers and magazines, and so forth (see Zaret [2000]for examples). The rise of opinion polling as the predominant method of assessing mass opinion (as opposed to other possible indicators) has been subjected to plenty of critiques. See Blumer 1969 [1948], Bourdieu 1979, Herbst 1993, and Lee 2001 for examples.

opinion on public policy. Other analysts reject the idea that the public has consistent views at all, or even if it does, that those views exercise much influence over policymaking. Normative aspects of opinion/policy link are also controversial. While some analysts have seen new mechanisms for inserting ordinary citizens' views into policy debates through the increasing use of polling, others decry the same processes for their potential to encourage politicians to “pander” to the public.

The confusing state of this debate reflects a number of underlying, and often contradictory, social and political changes of the past few decades. Among these are rapid advancements in polling techniques and technologies, along with an ever-growing number of public and private polls being conducted; the rapid growth of media outlets and changes in the form and content of political reporting using poll data; and the increasing availability of money and other resources (such as sophisticated advice from professional political consultants) available to political actors to strategically craft policy messages. Such institutional and organizational changes have simultaneously increased the measurement and reporting of public attitudes *and* provided political elites with new avenues to shape or direct those attitudes.

Three distinct images can be found in the existing literatures on the opinion/policy link: those that view the effects as large, those that view them as small, insignificant, or declining; and those that emphasize historical or institutional contingency. Advocates of “large” effects image view the opinion-policy link in American politics as strong, and possibly even growing over time.

Some historical studies have found strong links between public opinion and public policy, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Other analysts have found evidence in case studies of particular policy domains that key political actors have been influenced by their perceptions of public opinion in making important decisions.

By contrast, those who insist the impact of public opinion is “small” express skepticism about the capacity of public opinion to influence policy outcomes. For some, the very concept of a coherent or consistent “public opinion” capable of moving legislators is itself doubtful. Others argue that while a “public opinion” can be constructed through polls, most expressed policy opinions are only weakly held by most citizens, and/or easily subject to manipulation by elites (be they in government, the mass media, or business), or likely to be ignored by politicians. Polls themselves may be used strategically by politicians and policymakers not as devices to grasp popular opinion but rather as the means to craft legislation or policy rhetoric that will be more appealing to the public.

Finally, a number of analysts have proposed that a “contingent” image of responsiveness is most appropriate, one which takes as a point of departure evidence of the variation in how opinion impacts policy outcomes over time and space. Some advocates of a contingency view have identified differences in how public opinion operates in particular policy domains. Different domains are varying levels of responsiveness, either because of the nature of public opinion within the domain, or because of institutional and/or political factors that mediate the opinion-

policy link. Other analysts have emphasized over-time variability in the degree to which public opinion influences policy.

This paper develops an analysis of the state-of-the-art in the debates over the opinion-policy link in the rapidly growing body of research on polls, public opinion, and policymaking in contemporary American politics. Given the profusion of recent scholarship, this is a particularly useful time to try to sort out what we know and what remains controversial or in need of further research or analysis. The paper is in four parts. The first three sections dissect the social science literatures behind the large, small, and contingent images of public opinion's impact on policymaking, focusing on both theoretical and empirical contributions. Part four of the paper takes a step back to ask whether and how the different assumptions and conclusions they make can be reconciled to advance our understanding of the opinion-policy link.

#### “LARGE EFFECTS” IMAGES OF THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC OPINION

In the most general sense, we can identify three distinct types of evidence and arguments supporting the view that there is a high degree of policy responsiveness to public opinion in American politics. The first comes from quantitatively-oriented historical studies of the effects of either national or district majority public opinion, or changes in opinion, on policy outputs. Most of these investigations are based on time-series analyses using elaborately constructed measures of public opinion and legislative or executive (or in a few cases, judicial) policymaking. The second set of arguments come from more intensive examinations of policymaking in a single,

or small number, of policy domains. Finally, there are a set of arguments, more commonly asserted in journalistic treatments of American politics, which highlight the importance of the polls and other sources of information in influencing the behavior of politicians and the output of the political system.

### *General Theories of Responsiveness*

Claims that politicians and state managers, or the political system as a whole, are responsive to public opinion ultimately rest on some version of the argument that political elites derive some benefit from pursuing policies that are (or appear to be) in accord with the wishes of citizens (Downs, 1957; Geer 1996; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000: chap. 1). It is also possible, of course, that office seekers or officeholders really seek nothing more than to represent majority opinion, but few believe today that politicians treat adhering to public opinion as an end in itself. Nonetheless, politicians and state managers may perceive it to be in their interests to minimize the distance between their own positions and that of the public.

Within the broad parameters of a strategic (or rational choice) interpretation, both prospective and retrospective causal mechanisms have been advanced to account for the dynamic of responsiveness. In the prospective model, most closely related to the intellectual tradition associated with Anthony Downs (1957), candidates are hypothesized as striving to minimize the distance between their issue positions and those of the “median” voter (and parties are said to

prefer to nominate candidates who favor such positions). In two-party elections, they argue, the winning candidate will typically be the one who manages to minimize the distance to the greatest extent. In this way, elected officials and state managers in democratic societies will usually reflect the preferences of citizens. Yet voters often do not actually evaluate candidates for office without reference to previous performance (of either the incumbent candidate or his or her party).

Retrospective approaches (e.g. Fiorina 1981) extend the classical Downsian model to argue that voters reward or punish politicians for previous policy outcomes. Here, citizens' policy preferences come to be reflected in policy through a more indirect path, by steering policymaking towards or away from particular past decisions. Such arguments have also been used to explain the decisions of legislators in office, including the anticipation of future public preferences (cf. Fiorina 1973; Mayhew 1974; Arnold 1990).

### *Global Studies of Responsiveness*

A number of studies have reported high levels of general responsiveness in the American political system to public opinion. One approach has been to investigate the characteristics of voters in particular states or districts and the behavior (such as that reflected in roll-call votes) of politicians and policymakers in those regions. The early work of Miller and Stokes (1963), later characterized as a "dyadic representation" model, examined the relationship between opinions of voters in Congressional districts and the behavior of House members while in office, reporting

some modest (though variable) links. Other studies of constituency opinion – employing a variety of methodological assumptions and different measures of opinion and behavior – have extended the foundation established by Miller and Stokes, generally reporting stronger evidence of a persisting link (see e.g. Achen 1975, 1978; Erikson 1978; Page, Shapiro, Gronke and Rosenberg 1984; Bartels 1991; McDonough 1992).<sup>2</sup> Analogously, a few studies have used variation in state-level policy making to test for an opinion-policy linkage. Erikson and his colleagues (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1989, 1993), for example, conducted a broad cross-sectional analysis of public opinion and public policy across the 50 states, finding that states with more liberal polities tend to get more liberal public policies (and states with more conservative citizens get more conservative policies) across a broad range of policy domains, even when a broad range of statistical controls are used (see also Hill and Hinton-Andersson 1995; Hays, Esler and Hays 1996; Berry et al. 1998).

Both the constituency opinion and the state-level responsiveness studies have been plagued, however, by questions about the nature of the causality in the opinion-policy (or opinion-behavior) connection (Page 1994; Hill and Hinton-Andersson 1995).<sup>3</sup> For example, these studies typically have not addressed the possibility that political elites, or members of Congress

---

<sup>2</sup> These studies evolved significantly from the original Miller and Stokes work, addressing issues of causal inference (such as the possibility that elected officials may influence the attitudes of their constituents), measurement error, and simultaneity bias.

<sup>3</sup> Our discussion of these issues is especially informed by Page's (1994, pp. 26-27) dissection of both lines of scholarship.

within their districts or states, can shape or influence constituency opinion (rendering spurious evidence of opinion impact). Further, antecedent factors may influence both citizens' and politicians' attitudes. Policy feedback processes or other reciprocal institutional dynamics also may simultaneously influence both politicians and the public.

One important response to such methodological and theoretical conundrums has been the development of time-series analyses in which opinion measured at time  $t$  is examined in relationship to policy output at  $t+1$ . In research on the opinion-policy link over long historical time periods, a number of studies have found systematic evidence that policy reflects public opinion to a large extent. The most general approach has been advanced in a series of works by Stimson, Erikson and MacKuen (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1994, 1995; Stimson 1999; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson forthcoming). Seeking to test the broad impact of public opinion on policymaking, they have examined the association of historical evidence of changes in "public mood" with the output of national legislation and Supreme Court decisions. They start from the presumption that while citizens may not have sufficiently informed views on many of the details of policy controversies, there is nonetheless a broad ideological mood (Stimson 1999) that shifts over time and is visible to political elites.<sup>4</sup> When the public mood is "liberal," such as in the

---

<sup>4</sup> Their analysis of public opinion is complex. They start from the position the public is rarely if ever sufficiently informed about the details of any particular public policy to express meaningful opinions. Support for "spending more" or "spending less," for example, hardly provide the basis for policymakers to craft legislation. But this does not mean that public opinion has no impact on policymaking. Quite the contrary. It is through changes in the broad public mood (and related impact on election results) that politicians come to grasp the public preferences and they translate that into policy.

1960s, the policy output of Congress on domestic legislation in such policy arenas shifts in a more liberal direction, and the reverse happens in periods such as the early 1980s when the public mood turns conservative.

Stimson, Erikson, and MacKuen have tested these propositions through a time series analysis of public opinion and lawmaking by Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court since the 1950s. Their modeling efforts have produced results consistent with the broad theory: as the public mood shifts to a more liberal position, more liberal legislation is passed into law (see especially Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995). They offer two distinct interpretations of the ways in which the elected branches of government can respond to mood changes: electoral turnover (mood changes produce swings in the party balance in Congress or control of the presidency); and rational anticipation (incumbents change their behavior in response to perceived changes in mood before elections take place).<sup>5</sup>

Other researchers have also examined historical data on the opinion-policy link and found evidence that public opinion matters. Monroe (1979) examined the links between majority opinion toward a proposed policy change, and legislative outcomes in over 500 cases where new policies were adopted. He found that in 63% of the cases, policy moved in the direction preferred by majority opinion. Similar approaches have sought to develop more dynamic assessments of the opinion-policy link by examining the relationship between changes in public opinion and

---

<sup>5</sup> Their analyses suggest that the election mechanism is more important for the Senate and the president, but for the House a rational anticipation interpretation provides a better model.

changes in policy. Page and Shapiro (1983) identified 357 instances of change in public opinion on a particular issue, and measured policy developments regarding each issue one year later and over longer periods. They found that policy changed in ways congruent with public opinion 43% of the time, there was no change in policy in 33% of the cases, and non-congruent change in 22%. Adjusting for policy areas where change was not possible in the direction desired by the public and allowing for a longer time horizon, they concluded overall that in about two-thirds of the cases where policy change occurred, it was congruent with the change in public opinion.

Finally, one of the most basic ways in which public opinion may shape policymaking across many policy domains is when popular support for the president or the party in control of Congress erodes. Such a negative impact of public opinion can nonetheless have a powerful impact on policymaking. Low standing in the polls may encourage a president to drop an unpopular proposal, or to promote new proposals which are thought to be more popular. For example, several studies have found that presidents change policy course in response to low approval ratings and change budget priorities accordingly (e.g. Hicks [1984] on deficit spending and Hibbs [1987] on macroeconomic policies). The same logic applies to policy proposals within particular policy domains. The unpopularity of proposals such as Ronald Reagan's proposals to dramatically scale back the federal role in financing social programs in the early 1980s or Bill Clinton's proposal for a national health program in the early 1990s may be associated with their defeat (Cook and Barrett 1992; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).

### *Studies of Specific Policy Domains*

The global studies of the impact of public opinion on policymaking are, of necessity, general treatments that cannot examine the intricate details that shape actual policymaking within delimited policy domains. Case studies of particular issues or domains are especially well-suited for the latter task; researchers can take account of other politically significant factors and develop more sophisticated models of the timing and sequencing of policy change. In this section we consider very briefly some examples of research that endorse a “large effects” interpretation of policy responsiveness to public opinion.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of domestic social policy, most of the studies that include public opinion (or over-time change in public attitudes) report substantial evidence of responsiveness. Building from Erikson et al.’s (1993) work on state liberalism and Stimson’s (1999) measures of public mood, Fording (1997) finds that public opinion is a significant factor explaining state-level differences in AFDC program expansion between 1962 and 1980 (cf. Hill et al. 1995; Berry et al. 1998). Burstein’s (1998b) study of the evolution of equal employment opportunity legislation from the 1940s to the 1970s found that the crucial change making possible liberal policy breakthroughs was the shifting racial attitudes of whites and growing acceptance of the principles of racial

---

<sup>6</sup> Most studies of policy change within a single domain that have considered the role of public opinion have generally found an impact. Reviewing the literature on case studies of the impact of public opinion, Burstein (1998a, pp. 36-41) identifies 20 case studies published in the past two decades, *all but one* of which reports a strong relationship between opinion in the policy domain and policy output. Our discussion in this section is indebted to Burstein’s valuable review.

equality. Jacobs (1993) found strong archival evidence that perceptions of public opinion paved the way for the adoption of Medicare in the mid-1960s. Quirk and Hinchliffe (1998) assert that public opinion influenced the direction of public policy in six policy domains in the 1970s and 1980s (including social security, business regulation, tax cuts, and petroleum policy), although the precise routes through which public opinion influenced the direction of policy debates in Congress and in the White House varied across those domains.

In foreign policy, an especially large number of studies have attempted to assess the impact of public opinion on policy (see Bardes and Oldendick 1990; Holsti 1996; Powlick and Katz 1998; Kull and Destler 1999; Foyle 1999; Shapiro and Jacobs 2000; Sobel 2001). Perhaps the most widely studied question has been whether public opinion shapes defense spending. The general finding has been that the actual level of military effort is associated with majority public opinion (see e.g. Jencks 1985; Hartley and Russett 1992; Shapiro and Page 1994; Wlezien 1995, 1996). For example, Jencks (1985) found that the correlation between public opinion and military spending and annual changes in spending between 1973 and 1980 was exceptionally high ( $r=.94$ ). Taking a longer view, Hartley and Russett (1992) find much smaller, but still significant and persisting impacts of public opinion on changes in U.S. defense spending (controlling for Soviet military spending and the size of national budget deficit) in the Cold War era between 1965 and 1990 (see also the replication of these findings, adding information about issue salience, in Jones [1994]). Bartels (1991) examined the sources of Congressional support for the Reagan military

build-up, finding that district opinion exercised significant influence on congressional voting patterns.

Although the case for an impact of public opinion on foreign policy appears well established, because foreign and defense policies are often event- and crisis-driven, there are sharp problems of causal inference that are not nearly so profound as with domestic policy. When a foreign crisis changes the context within which the public views a question – such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 or Iran’s seizure of U.S. Embassy that same year – rapid changes in public attitudes are possible. These may be associated with later changes in policy, such as the Carter/Reagan military buildup following on the heels of the twin crises of 1979. But in such cases it would appear that the same factors that move public opinion also move elites and the overall direction of policymaking. In other words, the apparent correlation may be largely spurious.

### *The Importance of Polling*

A third set of arguments for policy responsiveness to public opinion focuses on the impact of the vast increase in the information available to political actors about public opinion, largely through the rapid growth of polling. Prior to the 1930s and the development of modern survey

research, there were few direct ways to discern public attitudes on specific policy questions (Converse 1986). Since the mid-1930s, however, and especially in recent decades, the volume and sophistication of polling data and survey research has increased dramatically.<sup>7</sup> Geer (1996) makes a simple but powerful point about this historical shift: political actors are more likely to respond to public opinion when they are confident what it is.<sup>8</sup> He reports that while President, George Washington had to mount his horse to ride around the countryside to talk to ordinary citizens in an attempt to discern public opinion. Abraham Lincoln tried to understand public opinion from reading newspapers and letters from the public. Recent presidents, however, have extremely detailed information about citizen's preferences (Geer 1996, chap. 1). The "public opinion apparatus" (Jacobs and Shapiro 1995) that presidents since Kennedy have developed includes extensive private polling operations under the direct control of the White House. The growing use of polls by other political actors and organizations – members of Congress, interest groups, national and state Democratic and Republican parties, and the mass media – provides further

---

<sup>7</sup> Overviews of the growth and development of polling and survey research can be found in Converse 1986 and Herbst 1993. On the growth of polling by presidents since Kennedy, see Jacobs and Shapiro 1995. For comparative evidence, showing that the U.S. is not alone in the growth and wide availability of polling, see Butler and Ranney 1992.

<sup>8</sup> V.O. Key made the same point bluntly in 1961:

In an earlier day, public opinion seemed to be pictured as a mysterious vapor that emanated from the undifferentiated citizenry and in some way or another enveloped the apparatus of government to bring it into conformity with the public will. These weird conceptions...passed out of style as the technique of the sample survey permitted the determination, with some accuracy, of opinions within the population. (Key 1961, p. 536)

This passage is quoted in Geer 1996, p. 61.

sources of information about public attitudes.<sup>9</sup> As Brehm (1993, p. 3) has put it, “there is hardly an aspect of American political life untouched by polling and survey research.”

The existence of such vast information, however it is gathered and for whatever purpose, may of its own accord produce higher levels of policy responsiveness. Geer (1996, p. 2) asserts that “well-informed politicians behave differently than their less well-informed counterparts – even when their motivations are the same.” His broad theoretical argument develops the claim that greater information facilitates responsiveness by giving political leaders the capacity to make reasoned judgements about where the public stands. Jacobs (1992, 1993) argues that although private polling by presidents and other policymakers is used to strategically craft policy and political rhetoric, the information from polls can nonetheless produce a “recoil effect” in which actors alter their behavior in response to opinion.

Many political commentators, however, have decried the growth of polls, arguing that politicians are all too prone to simply “pander” to the public.<sup>10</sup> For example, Arianna Huffington (2000) has recently decried the development of “poll driven leadership” in which “modern campaigns...are so thoroughly dominated by pollsters and consultants that there’s no oxygen left for ideas that might challenge the status quo.” She asserts further that:

---

<sup>9</sup> Some commentators have argued that the sheer magnitude of the polls and other sources of information available about citizen preferences today have reached the point of overload. See for example Yankelovich 1991; Wines 1994; Ornstein 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Jacobs and Shapiro (2000, pp. 3-4) cite a number of other examples of journalistic writing about the tendency of modern American politicians to simply cave in to public opinion.

Today's new poll-happy pol has replaced the old fashioned leader – one unafraid to make difficult, unpopular decisions. If Lincoln had surrounded himself with modern-day pollsters, he would more likely be known for something uncontroversial – creating Secretaries' Day, say – than for freeing the slaves...As we march into the next century, the motto of every politician seems to be: 'I am their leader; I shall follow them.'" (2000, pp. 73, 77)

Concerns about excessive responsiveness have now escalated to the point where politicians for office now often feel it necessary to contrast their ability to provide "leadership" as compared to mere pandering to public opinion. For example, in their announcements of their candidacies for the Presidency in 2000, both George W. Bush ("I've learned to lead. I don't run polls to tell me what to think,") and Bill Bradley ("I'm more interested in leadership than polls and politics") made such declarations.

#### "SMALL EFFECTS" VIEWS OF THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC OPINION

If the different versions of the large effects view identified above represent distinctive empirical and theoretical arguments for why and how public opinion matters, there are no shortage of analysts who are skeptical about such conclusions. The range of such appraisals stretch from those who dismiss the possibility of coherent public views, or that public opinion is so easily led or manipulated by elites that it cannot constitute an independent causal factor, and/or that there

is little direct connection between what the public thinks and what policymakers do.

### *General Theories of Non-Responsiveness*

Two different types of assumptions generally underlie arguments that policymaking is not responsive to public opinion. The first emphasizes broadly the autonomy of both elected officials and bureaucrats from the mass public. If theories of responsiveness often invoke some version of a median-voter model, models of non-responsiveness often assume that politicians can deviate from mass preferences and get away with it. These deviations may reflect the greater influence of activists and articulate actors, interest groups, or party and organizational interests, or the policy and political dispositions of politicians themselves, but either can lead toward non-responsiveness. Politicians may prefer to please activists – who provide important sources of money and voluntary labor – over general voters who may be viewed as routinely voting for one party or the other and can largely be taken for granted (Wright 1989; Aldrich 1995).<sup>11</sup> Politicians and policymakers may have their own (and often strongly held) policy preferences, and these too may come into conflict with public opinion, thereby prompting non-responsiveness (Cohen 1997; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000, p. 19). Research on “strategic shirking” suggests a modified version of this view, in which politicians will vote their preferences whenever they do not fear an

---

<sup>11</sup> Incumbency advantages and high – in recent years, overwhelming – reelection rates, especially in House elections (e.g. Cox and Katz 1996), may further contribute to the sense that the policy preferences of the mass public need necessarily govern politicians’ voting decisions.

electoral backlash (e.g. Kau and Rubin 1993). It has also been observed that politicians have incentives not to shift previously announced policy positions in response to changing public opinion for fear of appearing inconsistent or untrustworthy, even at the cost of non-responsiveness (e.g. Lott and Davids 1992).

The second assumption, related to the first, is that the policy preferences of most citizens are either non-attitudes (in the famous formulation of Converse [1964]), or are either so weakly held or sufficiently contradictory as to permit manipulation by elites. In this view, “public opinion surveys present only a rough idea of what people generally think because the results are highly sensitive to a number of factors...Polls may even create the impression of public opinion on questions in which none actually exists” (Domhoff 1998, p. 172; see also Bourdieu 1979; Ginsberg 1986; Herbst 1993; but cf. Converse 1996). Many analysts have also emphasized that the flow of information from polls and surveys is hardly the unidirectional one (from mass public to political elites) sometimes posited by advocates of the view that public opinion has large effects. Polls and surveys can and are often used strategically, to help shape policy proposals or frame policy rhetoric to maximize the “fit” with public opinion. And measured public opinion may be a result, rather than a cause, of actions of policymakers.

#### *Empirical Evidence of Non-Responsiveness*

The most basic way in which policy is likely to be non-responsive to public opinion is if there are relatively few policies about which the public has clear and consistent views that political

leaders might meaningfully follow. Converse's (1964, 1970) widely-debated thesis was based on an NES panel study in the late 1950s. He showed that most respondents did not maintain ideologically consistent responses to repeated survey questions, and he interpreted such seemingly random responses as reflecting "non-attitudes." An army of assessments of Converse's controversial thesis has appeared over the years, but the debate it launched has remained largely unresolved (cf. Brooks 1994). A prominent attempt to show that the changing political environment of the late 1960s had improved the ideological and informational capacities of citizens was advanced by Nie, Verba, and Petrocik (1976; see also Inglehart 1990, chap. 10). But claims of declining non-attitudes prompted telling critiques on methodological grounds (Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber 1978; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1978). Other scholarship, such as that of Smith (1989) and Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), have found little substantive support for the claim that voters are becoming more sophisticated.

Recent work in political psychology has suggested some reasons for measured skepticism about the original Converse model. Theories of the "reasoning voter" have sought to show how voters are capable of reasoning through cues and heuristics of various sorts, *even* in the absence of detailed information or policy understandings (e.g. Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991; Popkin 1991; Zaller 1992). Other critics of Converse have argued that it is the ambiguities of the questions, or the complexities of the issues, rather than non-attitudes, that produces respondent instability (Achen 1975; Zaller and Feldman 1992). Finally, the work of Page and Shapiro (1992)

suggest that at the aggregate level, public opinion – and most significantly, changes in aggregate opinion over time – can be characterized as “rational” and associated in a meaningful way with events, crises, or economic fluctuations, even if individual survey respondents are poorly informed or ideologically inconsistent.

A different source of non-responsiveness may stem the sources of public opinion drawn upon by politicians and policymakers. Herbst’s (1997) investigation of how state-level political leaders “read” public opinion is especially instructive in this regard. The dominant approach of the policy managers Herbst studied in Illinois was to examine (1) constituent letters, (2) letters to the editors of newspapers, and (3) the positions taken by organized interest groups as ways to gauge public opinion. Surprisingly, she finds that these three inputs were viewed by these policy managers as “representative” of public opinion because they view the results of opinion polling with skepticism. We know less about how national-level political elites discern public opinion, but Powlick (1995) and Kull and Destler (1999, pp. 219-21) report evidence from separate studies of the impact of public opinion on foreign policymaking that the primary sources drawn upon by government officials (Powlick) and members of Congress (Kull and Destler) are the media and the current state of Congressional opinion. To the extent that such sources of public opinion are biased, they may lead political elites to policies not desired by the mass public.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Alternative measures of public opinion need not necessarily be biased, and could, in some cases, actually provide a more authoritative source of opinion than polls. In his forthcoming study of opinion formation during the civil rights era (1948-1964), Taeku Lee presents a compelling case that the content and character of letters to the president provide a more authoritative source of rapidly changing attitudes towards race than did the opinion snapshots provided by opinion polls.

### *The Manipulation of Public Opinion by Elites*

Even if the public has coherent views, it may nonetheless be the case that those views can be either created or changed by the efforts of political or economic elites. In the formulation of Ginsberg (1986), the rapid growth of polling reflects an attempt on the part of state managers and political elites to channel citizen opinion and prevent the emergence of contentious politics. Others have emphasized more modestly the extensive efforts and frequent successes of political elites in shaping or even manipulating public opinion. As we noted in the previous section, presidential polling operations have become an institutionalized feature of the White House over the past 60 years, but especially since the Kennedy Administration. While these polls may be used to gauge public opinion on a particular issue, they may often be undertaken to test the popularity of particular political rhetoric and policy framings in *advance* of public presentation, in an attempt to improve the reception of particular proposals already decided upon (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000: chap. 2). Other organizational features of the executive branch perform similar tasks. The White House Office of Communication engages in continual efforts to manage the news and shape citizen perceptions in ways that are favorable to the Administration's agenda (Maltese 1994). Each major governmental agency has its own sophisticated public relations operation to promote its activities, and many undertake efforts to understand public views in

their domain.

Some research suggests that presidents may, under certain circumstances, have special powers to shape or direct public opinion. One way this may happen is by focusing public attention on particular social problems or policy proposals through prominent speeches and/or careful use of the mass media (Skowronek 1993; Cohen 1997; but cf. Hill 1998).<sup>13</sup> The power to increase the salience of an issue can alter the impact of opinion, even if policy preferences *per se* don't change. For example, Beckett's (1997) study of the politics of criminal justice since the 1960s demonstrates powerful effects of such presidential priming can sometimes have on public opinion. When presidents (or presidential candidates) focus on the "crime problem" or drugs, public concern shoots way up, and while the peak levels of concern that have been attained at various points cannot be maintained, overall support for anti-crime or anti-drug policies has grown in the 1980s and 1990s (even though crime rates were stagnant or falling during this period).<sup>14</sup>

More rarely, presidents may sometimes succeed in changing public opinion itself (Page

---

<sup>13</sup> The massive literature on the agenda-setting powers of the media (see e.g. Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Bennett 1990; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Zaller 1996) provide evidence for one crucial mechanism which enables Presidents – with their privileged access to the media – to manipulate public concerns.

<sup>14</sup> For example, when George Bush launched an aggressive campaign against illegal drugs in 1989, an astonishing 64% of respondents in September of that year told Gallup interviewers that drugs were the *most* important problem facing the nation. Similar jumps in public concern about crime followed on the heels of Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan's anti-crime and war-on-drugs campaigns, and Bill Clinton's proposal for a sweeping crime bill in 1994.

and Shapiro 1992, chap. 8; Cohen 1997), although such impacts are often temporary as their opponents will inevitably challenge such opinion-shaping projects and may eventually be able to return attitudes to the status quo. A prominent recent example of such a dynamic is Bill Clinton's dramatic speech in September 1993 outlining his call for a national health insurance program, which produced a spike in popular support for a public program, followed by extensive attacks on the Administration's proposals which eventually reduced support for the plan (cf. Hacker 1997; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).

Other public actors besides Presidents attempt to shape public opinion, although their more limited access to the mass media reduces the effectiveness of such efforts (with Governors, Senators, and large-city mayors having the greatest opportunities, followed by lower-level elected officials and bureaucrats). Business elites and interest groups also seek to manipulate public opinion. Probably the broadest evidence for such manipulation by business elites can be found in the power elite literature. Here the efforts of the business community to shape public opinion, notably through the funding of peak business associations, think tanks, and policy organizations, have been documented. Most closely associated with the writings of G. William Domhoff,<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Domhoff first introduced his power elite model in 1967, in the first edition of *Who Rules America?*, and has elaborated it in a series of works since then (cf. Domhoff 1967, 1970, 1979, 1990, 1998). It is important to note that Domhoff's model does not imply that the power elite seeks to influence or control *all* decisions. There are many issues – in particular, social issues – which may be very important in other respects but generate no particular stance among the power elite. Second, there are issues where the power elite is internally divided, and incapable of speaking with one voice. These divisions may arise from either clashing sectoral or firm interests, or even occasional genuine disagreements over the direction of policy in a particular arena. In most cases, power elite consensus is not a given, but has to be developed by the various policy organizations and other institutions of the power elite. In this sense, Domhoff's

power elite analysts have argued that the orchestrated efforts of American business have broad influence over public opinion and the making of public policy (see e.g. Domhoff 1967, 1990, 1998; Prechel 1990; Akard 1992; Ferguson 1995; Martin 2000; cf. Vogel 1989).<sup>16</sup>

### *Opinion-Policy Linkages Weakening?*

Finally, a number of scholars have developed a version of the pessimistic thesis that asserts that responsiveness has declined over time. For example, Monroe (1998) and Jacobs and Shapiro (1997) report evidence from replications of their earlier studies of the impact on opinion (Monroe 1979; Page and Shapiro 1983) that suggests declining overall responsiveness in recent years (see also Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).<sup>17</sup> More sweepingly, the research of Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2000) reports long-term historical evidence of a variable impact of constituency opinion and candidate's issue and ideological positioning. They report that ideological responsiveness was low from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century through to the 1930s, rose steadily

---

important work in this area has straddled the "small effects" and contingent perspectives.

<sup>16</sup> Smith (2000) has recently offered a systematic examination of power elite theories of business influence on public opinion, and the making of public policy. His analyses suggest that while businesses can shape public opinion through think tank advocacy and the mass media (2000, chap. 8), for the most part this impact is fairly modest (e.g. pp. 210-13). More strikingly, he produces evidence that business unity around policy questions frequently produces media attention and corresponding backlashes that undermine corporate political power.

<sup>17</sup> Monroe (1998) found that majority opinion on policy questions declined from 63% in the 1960-79 period to 55% in the 1980-93 period. Jacobs and Shapiro (1997), in an as yet preliminary investigation, found that policy responsiveness to public opinion in the areas of welfare, crime, social security, and health care) fell from 67% in 1984-87 to just 36% during the first half of Bill Clinton's first term in office.

from the mid-1930s through the early 1970s, but then declined into the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Other analysts have suggested that the rapid expansion of money in the American political system is undermining responsiveness by encouraging the addition of loopholes to legislation that appears symbolically responsive, but upon closer inspection substantively at odds with public opinion (e.g. Clawson, Neustadtl, and Weller 1998). Increasing polarization in Congress, especially with the erosion of the Southern wing of the Democratic Party and the Northern liberal wing of the Republican Party, has reduced opportunities for bipartisan bargaining.

#### “CONTINGENT” VIEWS OF THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC OPINION

If the “large” and “small” effects views represent the two major poles in the debates over the opinion-policy link, a variety of contingent assessments standing between them have been advanced.<sup>19</sup> In oft-cited passage, V.O. Key asserted in 1961 that

The anxieties of students about their inability to gauge the effects of opinion rest on an implicit assumption that public opinion is, or in some way ought to be, positively directive of government action. Our analyses suggest that the relationships between government and public opinion must be pictured in varied

---

<sup>18</sup> Ansolabehere et al. (2000) analyzed racial issues separately from other issues, to avoid confounding the peculiarities of racial politics among the Southern congressional delegations before the 1970s. The details of the story are more complicated than the simple summary here suggests. Beginning with the New Deal, Republicans began responding to constituency opinion, as those running in districts with higher levels of Democratic strength in their districts adopted more “liberal” policy stances. It was not until the mid-1960s that Democratic candidates became responsive to the level of Republican strength in their district. Responsiveness began to decline in the mid-1970s, but more among Republicans than Democrats. We thank Stephen Ansolabehere for making a pre-publication draft available to us.

<sup>19</sup> Sharp’s (1999, chap. 1) thoughtful overview of the logic of contingency approaches has informed our discussion here.

ways...Mass opinion may set general limits, themselves subject to change over time, within which government may act. In some instances opinion may be permissive but not directive of specific action. In others opinion may be, if not directive, virtually determinative of particular acts. (Key 1961, p. 97)

Key's approach to thinking about the opinion-policy link implies a third, "contingent" view of the opinion-policy link. The image of policy responsiveness implied by contingency approaches sees the large or small effects view as providing a useful starting point for understanding the impact of public opinion. Rather, contingency approaches investigate institutional and comparative-historical variation in the opinion/policy link. In short, the views of the public may or may not matter, depending on a number of factors unique to each political issue or controversy.

Interviews with a representative sample of members of the House of Representatives led Cook and Barrett (1992) to support a contingency theory of the link between the desires of the public and Congressional responsiveness. Depending on the particular issue, Congress members say they are influenced very differently by what the public thinks. For example, when asked how he made decisions, a representative in their survey responded, "I decide based on the three Cs: Constitution, Conscience, and Constituency." Further, he said that the mix between the three factors changes depending on the issue (Cook and Barrett, 1992, p. 235). It is perhaps this mix that underlies similarities and differences in the degree of responsiveness of policy makers to the public in any policy domain.

The primary evidence for a contingency model comes from comparative analyses of how

and when opinion moves policy in different policy domains, or over time (see e.g. Sharp 1999; Hill and Hurley 1999). There are well-established institutional reasons why responsiveness may vary. Policymaking occurs through legislation, administrative action, or judicial decisions, and at the national, state, and local level. Where policy gets made matters (e.g. Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Legislative bodies are subject to periodic elections, which potentially raise the stakes of non-responsiveness. Judges often have permanent appointments and thus need not fear loss of office. Bureaucratic officials may have more or less exposure to public opinion, depending on the type of policy they are responsible for or the structure of their agency. Related to this, issues where the budgetary cost of responsiveness is high may reduce the impact of public opinion in comparison to non-monetary issues (Sharp 1999, pp. 26-27).

It is also clear that levels of salience, coherence, and intensity of citizens' attitudes toward particular policy issues varies widely. The salience of a particular issue for the public may matter both for the possibility of over-time shifts in public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1992, chap. 2), and for the likelihood that politicians will listen to the public (e.g. Jacobs 1993; Jones 1994; Burstein 1998b). Some types of issues are more opaque to the public than others, with important consequences. For example, Page and Shapiro (1992, p. 373) argue that manipulation of public opinion by elites is much more common on foreign than domestic policy. One reason issue salience matters is that the higher visibility of salient issues increases the costs to politicians of deviating from median preferences (Geer 1996, p. 171). The distribution of attitudes may also

matter; on an issue where attitudes are very bimodal and there is little room for compromise, such as abortion, responsive outcomes are much more problematic than on issues where public opinion is unimodal (e.g. Strickland and Whicker 1992).

Another set of mechanisms differentiating responsiveness in policy domains is the overall structure of the domain (cf. Laumann and Knoke [1987] and Burstein [1991] on policy domains). Some policy domains are thick with powerful interest groups and/or have long-established policies in place that are more difficult (or costly) to alter. In such cases, responsiveness is likely to be low. In other domains, especially those with new or emerging issue controversies and devoid of well-organized interest organizations, responsiveness is likely to be greater.<sup>20</sup> Policy domains where social movements from below generate pressure on state managers for policy reform may in some cases (but not all) increase the likelihood of responsiveness (Burstein 1999). Related to this, issues where there is a large “attentive public” can increase responsiveness (e.g. Kingdon 1995, pp. 148-49).<sup>21</sup> Finally, path dependent policymaking processes (Pierson 2000) also restrict policy responsiveness, as policy outcomes at one point in time constrain what is

---

<sup>20</sup> Domhoff’s (1998) observation that power elite organizations have varying degrees of concern about different issues (ranging from intense concern on something like labor law to non-existent concern on something like gay and lesbian rights) provides another reason to expect a variable impact of public opinion.

<sup>21</sup> Concrete comparisons across policy domains unsurprisingly indicate differences in responsiveness. For example, Sharp’s (1999) analysis of the dynamics of public opinion and policy change on six issues (criminal justice, affirmative action, pornography, abortion, welfare, and social security) suggests wide variation, with some policy domains such as social security and welfare being significantly more responsive than on issues such as affirmative action or abortion.

possible – or even likely to be considered – at later points in time (cf. Skocpol 1995). Policy issues or entire domains without entrenched interest groups or previous policy legacies have much greater capacities for responsiveness.

## CONCLUSION

The three views of policy responsiveness to public opinion in the United States outlined in this paper reach fundamentally different conclusions which cannot be easily reconciled. For some analysts, the relationship between citizen's opinions and the policy output of governments is strong. Global studies of the opinion-policy link, as well as case studies which have included public opinion as an explanatory variable, usually report significant effects. These findings suggest that a pluralist model of American government may still have life, but not all advocates of such "large effects" view of public opinion necessarily think of it as a healthy relationship for democratic governance. If politicians gain from "pandering" to public opinion, their capacity to exercise leadership on issues that cuts against the latest polling data is correspondingly reduced.

Proponents of both the "contingent" and "small effects" views of the impact of public opinion on policymaking contest claims that there is a systematic association between public opinion and policymaking. The small effects image often rests on the claim that a coherent public opinion does not exist outside the polling context. Analysts endorsing this view sometimes also argue that the relationship derives from either antecedent or mediating factors ignored or

dismissed by the large effects theories. The most important of these factors is the degree to which public opinion can be influenced by political elites, either through the strategic use of polling and political rhetoric to change the salience of issues in the public mind or outright changing opinion on a particular issue or package of issues. If public opinion can indeed be influenced or even manipulated, its' independent causal force in the political system is limited at best.

Contingency arguments emphasize indeterminacy in the relationship, seeing some policy questions as inherently easier to shape or control citizens' opinions about from above than others because of institutional factors or divergence in the nature and character of public opinion. Variation across policy domains is also produced by the structure of interest group representation and the legacies of path-dependent policymaking processes. The relationship also may change over time, introducing historical contingency into the equation.

At this point in the evolution of the scholarly debates about the policy impact of public opinion, we think several conclusions can reasonably be drawn. Where measured public opinion expresses a coherent mood or view on a particular policy question (or bundle of policy questions) in a way that is recognizable by political elites, it is more likely than not that the movement of policy will be in the direction of public opinion. *Prima facie*, this is a powerful finding with important implications for the practice of small 'd' democracy, and one which we believe is sustainable on the basis of the existing evidence. But two crucial caveats must also be

entered. First, within the broad parameters established by public opinion, politicians and policy entrepreneurs often have substantial room to maneuver policy in detailed ways that are not visible to the public. For example, there are many different ways to reform welfare, combat the spread of communism in less developed countries, fight crime, reduce unemployment, or address energy shortages. As in other arenas of social life, when it comes to making policy, “the devil is in the details.”

Second, while public opinion clearly sets important parameters on policymaking, the combination of contradictory public views on many key policy issues and the capacity of political elites to shape or direct citizens’ views significantly reduces the independent causal impact of public opinion. There are two distinct components at work here. Policy questions are inherently multi-sided, and it is frequently the case that policy and political entrepreneurs can draw upon particular issue framings and broad ideological underpinnings that have popular support to promote a particular policy agenda (cf. Benford and Snow 2000). In this sense, the flow of causality is reversed: elites can “use” public opinion as a weapon of political struggle, instead of merely responding to it. The changing institutional vortex – including the rise of the mass media, sophisticated polling technologies and campaigning strategies, and the growing importance of money in the political system – has *simultaneously* increased our capacity to understand public opinion *and* made it easier for elites to manipulate or work around it. The vexing question of how much influence citizens have over democratic governments, frequently

asked and answered in the past, remains frustratingly elusive.

## REFERENCES

- Achen, Christopher H. 1975. "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response." *American Political Science Review* 69: 1218-31.
- Achen, Christopher H. 1978. "Measuring Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 475-510.
- Akard, Patrick J. 1992. "Corporate Mobilization and Political Power: The Transformation of U.S. Economic Policy in the 1970s." *American Sociological Review* 57: 597-615.
- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, and Charles Stewart III. n.d. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." Unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, MIT.
- Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Buildup." *American Political Science Review* 85: 457-74.
- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Beckett, Katherine. 1997. *Making Crime Pay*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-39.
- Bennett, W. Lance. 1990. "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States." *Journal of Communication* 40: 103-25.
- Berry William D., Evan J. Ringquist, Richard C. Fording, and Russell L. Hanson. 1998. "Measuring citizen and government ideology in the American states, 1960-93." *American Journal of Political Science* 42: 327-48.

- Bishop, George, Robert Oldendick, Alfred Tuchfarber. 1978. "Change in the Structure of American Political Attitudes: The Nagging Question of Question Wording." *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 250-69.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969 [1948]. "Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling." In *Symbolic Interaction*, pp. 195-208. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. "Public Opinion Does Not Exist." In *Communication and Class Struggle*, vol. 1, ed. Armond Matelart and Seth Siegelau, pp. 124-30. New York: International General.
- Brehm, John. 1993. *The Phantom Respondents: Opinion Surveys and Political Representation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Brooks, Clem. 1994. "The Selectively Political Citizen? Modeling Attitudes, Nonattitudes, and Change in 1950's Public Opinion." *Sociological Methods and Research* 22: 419-52.
- Burstein, Paul. 1991. "Policy Domains." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17: 327-50.
- Burstein, Paul. 1998a. "Bringing the Public Back In: Should Sociologists Consider the Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy?" *Social Forces* 77: 27-62.
- Burstein, Paul. 1998b [1985]. *Discrimination, Jobs, and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Burstein, Paul. 1999. "Social Movements and Public Policy." In *How Social Movements Matter*, ed. Marco Guigni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly, pp. 3-21. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Butler, David and Austin Ranney (eds). 1992. *Electioneering: A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clawson, Dan, Alan Neustadtl, and Mark Weller. 1998. *Dollars and Votes: How Business Campaign Contributions Subvert Democracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 1997. *Presidential Responsiveness and Public Policy-Making: The Public and the Policies that Presidents Choose*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Cook, Fay Lomax and Edith J. Barrett. 1992. *Support for the American Welfare State: The Views of Congress and the Public*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Converse, Philip E. 1996. "The Advent of Polling and Political Representation." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29: 649-57.
- Converse, Jean. 1986. *Survey Research in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Domhoff, G. William. 1967. *Who Rules America?* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Domhoff, G. William. 1970. *The Higher Circles*. New York: Random House.
- Domhoff, G. William. 1979. *The Powers That Be*. New York: Random House.
- Domhoff, G. William. 1990. *The Power Elite and the State*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Domhoff, G. William. 1998. *Who Rules America? Power and Politics in the Year 2000*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.
- Erikson, Robert S. 1978. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Behavior: A Reexamination of the Miller-Stokes Representation Data." *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 511-35.
- Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. Forthcoming. *The Macro Polity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. 1989. "Political Parties, Public Opinion, and State Policy in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 83: 728-50.
- Erikson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. 1993. *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Democracy in American States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferguson, Thomas. 1995. *Golden Rule: The Investment Theory of Party Competition and the Logic of Money-Driven Political Systems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fiorina, Morris. 1973. "Electoral Margins, Constituency Influence, and Policy Moderation: A Critical Assessment." *American Politics Quarterly* 1: 479-98.

- Fiorina, Morris. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fording, RC. 1997. "The Conditional Effect of Violence as a Political Tactic: Mass Insurgency, Welfare Generosity, and Electoral Context in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science*: 41: 1-29
- Foyle, Douglas C. 1999. *Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gallup, George and Saul Rae. 1940. *Pulse of Democracy*. New York: Simon and Shuster.
- Geer, John G. 1996. *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls: A Theory of Democratic Leadership*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1986. *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Glynn, Carroll J., Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O'Keefe, and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1999. *Public Opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Hacker, Jacob. 1997. *The Road to Nowhere: The Genesis of President Clinton's Plan for Health Security*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hartley, Thomas and Bruce Russett. 1992. "Public Opinion and the Common Defense: Who Governs Military Spending in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 86: 905-15.
- Hays, Scott P., Michael Esler, and Carol E. Hays. 1996. "Environmental Commitment Among the States: Integrating Alternative Approaches to State Environmental Policy." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 26: 41-58.
- Herbst, Susan. 1993. *Numbered Voices*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hill, Kim Q. 1998. "The Policy Agendas of the President and the Mass Public: A Research Validation and Extension." *American Journal of Political Science* 42: 1328-34.

- Hill, Kim Q. and Angela Hinton-Andersson. 1995. "Pathways of Representation: A Causal Analysis of Public Opinion-Public Policy Linkages." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 924-35.
- Hill, Kim Q. and Hurley. 1999. "Dyadic Representation Reappraised." *American Journal of Political Science* 43: 109-37.
- Hill, Kim Q., Jan E. Leighley, and Angela Hinton-Andersson. 1995. "Lower Class Policy Mobilization and Policy Linkage in the United States." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 75-86.
- Holsti, Ole R. 1996. *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Huffington, Arianna. 2000. *How to Overthrow the Government*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Donald P. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. 1992. "The Recoil Effect: Public Opinion and Policymaking in the U.S. and Britain." *Comparative Politics* 24: 199-217.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. 1993. *The Health of Nations: Public Opinion and the Making of American and British Health Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1994. "Studying Substantive Democracy: Public Opinion, Institutions, and Policymaking." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27 (March): 9-16.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1995. "The Rise of Presidential Polling: The Nixon White House in Historical Perspective." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 59: 163-95.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1997. "The Myth of the Pandering Politician." *The Public Perspective* 8 (April/May): 3-5.

- Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jencks, Christopher. 1985. "Methodological Problems in Studying 'Military Keynesianism.'" *American Journal of Sociology* 91: 373-79.
- Jones, Bryan D. 1994. *Reconceiving Decision-Making in Democratic Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Key, V.O. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf.
- Kingdon, John. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: HarperCollins.
- Kull, Steven and I.M. Destler. 1999. *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute.
- Laumann, Edward O. and David Knoke. 1987. *The Organizational State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Lee, Taeku. 2001. *Mobilizing Public Opinion: Black Insurgency and Racial Attitudes in the Civil Rights Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1996. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York: Norton.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin and Gary W. Marks. 2000. *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States*. New York: Norton.
- Maltese, John A. 1994. *Spin Control: The White House Office of Communications and the Management of Presidential News*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Manski, Charles. 2000. "Collection of Subjective Expectations Data Through Questionnaires." *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (in press).
- Martin, Cathie Jo. 2000. *Stuck in Neutral: Business and the Politics of Human Capital Investment Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Markoff, John. 1996. *Waves of Democracy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Mayhew, David. 1974. *The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McDonough, Eileen. 1992. "Representative Democracy and State Building in the Progressive Era." *American Political Science Review* 86: 938-50.
- Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57: 45-56.
- Monroe, Alan D. 1979. "Consistency Between Public Preferences and National Policy Decisions." *American Politics Quarterly* 7: 3-19.
- Monroe, Alan D. 1998. "Public Opinion and Public Policy 1980-1993." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 62: 6-28.
- Ornstein, Norman. 1996. "Enough Polls!" *USA Today* Oct 7: 17A.
- Page, Benjamin I. 1994. "Democratic Responsiveness? Untangling the Links Between Public Opinion and Policy." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27 (March): 25-29.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1983. "Effects of Public Opinion on Public Policy." *American Political Science Review* 77: 175-90.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Page, Benjamin I., Robert Y. Shapiro, Paul W. Gronke, and Robert M. Rosenberg. 1984. "Constituency, Party, and Representation in Congress." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 48: 741-56.
- Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94: 251-68.
- Popkin, Samuel. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Powlick, Philip J. 1995. "The Sources of Public Opinion for American Foreign Policy Officials." *International Studies Quarterly* 39: 427-52.

- Powlick, Philip J. and Andrew Z. Katz. 1998. "Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus." *Mershon International Studies Review* 42: 29-61.
- Prechel, Harland. 1990. "Steel and the State: Industry Politics and Business Policy Formation, 1940-89." *American Sociological Review* 55: 648-68.
- Quirk, Paul J. and Joseph Hinchliffe. 1998. "The Rising Hegemony of Mass Opinion." *Journal of Policy History* 10: 19-50.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. and Lawrence R. Jacobs. 2000. "Who Leads and Who Follows? U.S. Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy." In *Decisionmaking in a Glass House*, ed. Brigitte Nacos, Robert Shapiro, and Pierangelo Isernia, pp. 223-246. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. and Benjamin I. Page. 1994. "Foreign Policy and the Public." In *The New Politics of American Foreign Policy*, ed. David A. Deese. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Sharp, Elaine B. 1999. *The Sometime Connection: Public Opinion and Social Policy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1995. *Social Policy in the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Skowronek, Stephen. 1993. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership From John Adams to George Bush*. Cambridge: Harvard University/Belknap Press.
- Smith, Mark A. 2000. *American Business and Political Power: Public Opinion, Elections, and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sniderman, Paul, Richard Brody, and Philip Tetlock. 1991. *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sobel, Richard A. 2001. *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stimson, James A. 1999. *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert Erikson. 1994. "Opinion and Policy: A Global View." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27 (March): 29-35.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 543-65.
- Strickland, Ruth A. and Marcia L. Whicker. 1992. "Political and Socioeconomic Indicators of State Restrictiveness Toward Abortion." *Policy Studies Journal* 20: 598-620.
- Sullivan, John, James Piereson and George Marcus. 1978. "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings." *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 233-249.
- Truman, David. 1945. "Public Opinion Research as a Tool of Public Administration." *Public Administration Review* 5: 62-72.
- Verba, Sidney. 1996. "The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Surveys and American Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 90: 1-7.
- Vogel, David. 1989. *Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wines, Michael. 1994. "Washington Really Is in Touch. We're the Problem," *New York Times*, October 16, 1994, Section 4, p. 1.
- Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 981-1000.
- Wlezien, Christopher. 1996. "Dynamics of Representation: The Case of U.S. Spending on Defence." *British Journal of Political Science* 26: 81-103.
- Wright, Gerald. 1989. "Policy Voting in the U.S. Senate: Who is Represented?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14: 465-86.
- Yankelovich, Daniel. 1991. *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991.
- Zaret, David. 2000. *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zaller, John R. 1996. "The Myth of Massive Media Impact Revived: New Support for a Discredited Idea." In *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*, ed. Diana C. Muntz, Paul Sniderman, and Richard Brody, pp. 125-44. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Zaller, John R. and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579-616.